

Honoring the Heroes of 9/11

September 11, 2008

Madam Speaker, today we mark an event so important to our nation that it can be identified, simply, by two numbers. The phrase "9/11" bears all of the emotions of that fateful day in 2001. Feelings of shock, helplessness and sorrow are still present seven years later as our nation engages its enemies abroad. As Americans, we stand to honor those who lost their lives that day, as well as the brave men and women of the armed services who sacrifice so much to protect us from further attack.

On September 11, 2001, we learned that heroes still exist. Just as those who serve our country are willing to forego life for the benefit of others, the firefighters, police and emergency personnel and those passengers who fought back provided the reassurance that Americans still will give their lives for others and preserve the future of our nation. The heroes of 9/11 reaffirm that those who served in past battles did not serve in vain. Their examples allowed us a new generation of role models.

As we honor those who lost their lives at the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, we must take this opportunity to recognize them as genuine heroes. The significance of their sacrifice is

an incredible reminder of the great responsibility we have as Americans. There is not a U.S. citizen who is not affected by the events of that day. To honor their memory is to honor the sacrifice made by everyone who has laid down their life in defense of freedom.

9/11 marked a coming of age for the world. International terrorism had shown up at our front door and surprised a sleeping world. Though the events of that day will be remembered for the physical devastation that ensued, hope and renewed sense of patriotism will be September 11th's legacy. Our innocence shattered, we made renewed efforts to keep our homeland safe and our world more secure.

Shortly after the attacks of September 11, I joined a half a dozen members of Congress in visiting New York City and the remains of the World Trade Center. I wanted to express on behalf of all Kansans our support and concern for the victims and their families and to express our condolences.

Just a few feet away from Ground Zero, New Yorkers created a makeshift memorial to those who died in the rubble of the Twin Towers. There, thousands of ordinary people brought cards and flowers as a tribute to those who died. While there, I happened to pick up a white piece of notebook paper, blue lines, jagged edge, torn from a spiral notebook. On that piece of paper was the writing of a child: "Dear Daddy, How much I miss you. How I hope heaven is a wonderful place and I hope I can live a life good enough to join you there someday. Signed, Amanda, Age 12"

Amanda, who I will not meet nor ever know, must never be forgotten. Her note to her Dad is a reminder that each generation is called on to preserve our way of life and that the cause is noble. That I, as a Member of Congress and we, as American citizens, have a responsibility--there must be no more Amandas.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my gratitude for the heroes we are honoring today. Most importantly, I want to express my gratitude to the people who have made our freedoms a reality. Thank you, and may God bless you.